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TRACK  
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# MARVIN MUSQUIN



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## How to stop him...?

Gajser again. Whether it is the fast curves and big jumps of Matterley Basin or sharp turns and the jittery bumps of the Mantova sand, the Honda Gariboldi athlete is seemingly on course for a remarkable season in MXGP. The first rider to earn MX2 and MXGP crowns back-to-back? He has a comfortable and fluffy 92 point cushion to help

Photo by Ray Archer















**MotoGP**

## **Shining through it...**

It was only natural that the stormy climate in Holland would throw up a few surprises and this issue's MotoGP coverage will rightly focus on Jack Miller's achievement in staying the course through the atrocious conditions. Regardless if he can repeat the feat or not this was still a bright moment for MotoGP through the gloomy light of Assen

**Photo by CormacGP**





**AMA-MX**

## **Waiting for the challenger...**

With Ryan Dungey taking his turn on the injury list and fellow Baker-ee Jason Anderson also out for the foreseeable, Ken Roczen is frequently seeing clearer tracks in the AMA series. A fourth win was notched last weekend in Tennessee and he now fronts the standings by 47 points after 5 of 12 rounds


Photo by Simon Cudby











# JOHNNY RIDES LEATT

## GPX 6.5 CARBON HELMET

360 TURBINE TECHNOLOGY:

UP TO 30% REDUCTION OF HEAD IMPACT AT CONCUSSION LEVEL

UP TO 40% REDUCTION OF ROTATIONAL ACCELERATION TO HEAD AND BRAIN

LEATT ATHLETE: JOHNNY AUBERT





**LEATTI**





**MX**

# FULLBACK GRAND PRIX OF LOMBARDY

MANTOVA · JUNE 25th · Rnd 12 of 18

MXGP winner: Tim Gajser, Honda

MX2 winner: Mr Herlings...





BARDIA

MXGP LOM

# ANOTHER SPHERE

A MASTERFUL HERLINGS, AN UNSTOPPABLE GAJSER, A DUBIOUS GATE, SOME WORLDSBK STARS AND SWELTERING CONDITIONS IN ITALY: ROUND TWELVE OF 2016 MXGP DIPPED INTO THE SHALLOW AND PUNISHING SAND OF MANTOVA FOR THE SECOND GRAND PRIX IN A WEEK AND THE LAST BEFORE A RE-ENERGISING SUMMER BREAK FOR THE FIM MOTOCROSS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

By Adam Wheeler, Photos by Ray Archer



PLAY



Last week at Matterley Basin and the British Grand Prix, MXGP FIM World Championship leader Tim Gajser joked that he needed to get back into the sand in the few days between dominating round eleven and thinking of the twelfth stop at Mantova after barely riding the ground in recent months. At the Fullback (encouraging to see Youthstream gaining title sponsorship for individual events) Lombardia Grand Prix the nineteen year old was again undeniable and added Tony Cairoli's number plate to his 2016 trail of roost after having defied Romain Febvre, Evgeny Bobryshev and Max Nagl in the three previous rounds alone.

Sand used to be a weakness for the Slovenian but has become another indicator of his blurry speed of progress at the highest level. He crashed spectacularly at Valkenswaard in 2015 but improved enough and weathered heavy pressure by the time of the last European round at Assen last August to take a crucial victory in the soft-stuff and lay a couple of fingers on the MX2 crown. Forwarding the clock and arriving to Valkenswaard in 2016 and Gajser didn't win but his third place granted an assuring podium spot – 243 still hasn't missed a rostrum celebration in his first season and it is this consistency (born from a high regularity of good starts, strength and blooming confidence) that has been the solid 'red' rock of his championship candidacy this term.

The fact remains that Mantova was a strange kind of sand. It was hard-packed and rough in the way of jittery bumps. Riders again talked of the effects of the three support classes (EMX125, 250 and WMX) on the terrain and in 2015 the Nuvolari course had only been home to the principal GP categories. Lommel and the Grand Prix of Belgium is another league of sand altogether whereas Assen is closer to the Italian site but is softer, finer and less predictable (thus is the nature of a temporary build). With his runaway in the first moto and then challenge and stalk of Cairoli in the second it was clear how Gajser has ruled two very different kinds of circuit in the space of a week with the fast and wide turns and big jumps of Matterley Basin a stark contrast and now his sandy self-assurance another part of his potent arsenal.



Watching Gajser versus Cairoli was an interesting study. Eleven years split the champions and this was not completely evident on the bike even if Gajser was scrubbing and turning down the Honda in a way that the Sicilian used to in his 350 pomp. We have to pause here and state that Cairoli was far from 100% and was riding with painkillers to numb the discomfort from a chipped bone in his hand; a consequence of a heavy landing on the quad at Matterley. 222 was assisted by a fantastic start through one of the most complicated sets of opening turns on the calendar...and resisted the pokes and prods from Gajser admirably until the last ten minutes of the moto.

It was a fine show and similar in ilk to the close run between Romain Febvre (missing in action due to his concussion in Britain) and Gajser over two races at the French Grand Prix three weeks beforehand. You were left wishing for a fit Cairoli however and how the duel would have lasted if both athletes were on equal terms. They both seemed to enjoy loud support from the generous crowd; the copious Slovenian fans weighing-in heavily with cheers for their new sporting star and the Italian public joined by the neutrals in wishing to see Gajser face some sort of repost to his excellent form. The price of superiority for the Honda representative means that his underdog status is rapidly eroding.













Podium finishes for HRC's Gautier Paulin (the third in four events) and Monster Energy Kawasaki's Clement Desalle hinted that the established order inching nearer to Gajser's level and if the standings leader does eventually blow a start then the queue for subversion is beginning to form up. Mantova was a day to forget for Pole sitter HRC's Evgeny Bobryshev who faced a limiting combination of so-so starts and also Rockstar Energy IceOne Husqvarna's Max Nagl who crashed a little more than he'd like on the way to tenth overall.

Gajser's prolificacy means a 92 point gap in the MXGP standings – now over Cairoli as opposed to Febvre – and a margin of two Grands Prix with the slate counting down.

If MXGP is offering small signs that more riders might soon stake their claims for glory then the pack in MX2 have long since headed for the pool. The ideal visualisation of Red Bull KTM Jeffrey Herlings' authority this year and especially at Mantova was provided in the second race. The Dutchman already had his helmet off and was speaking on live TV before teammate Pauls Jonass crossed the finish line over 1min 14 seconds adrift in second place. Despite the discomfort of a cracked right heel Herlings was that good in Italy. He rode the sand like a man who knew every tick, lip and knuckle of the surface and won speed and seconds through sheer will of momentum. His rhythm was outstanding and his race-winning time quicker than MXGP in both motos.

On a weekend where Jeffrey learned that the FIM are to reinstate the regulation that forces riders out of MX2 who have defended the championship twice and thus force his move into MXGP for 2017 he highlighted two points: that is unequivocally one of the fastest 250 riders in the world (maybe in the modern era)... and also that MX2 will be a fine show without him. This was evident from the run between four riders for the final podium place behind the impressive and maturing HSF Logistics Brian Bogers that went down to the final lap and somehow fell into the hands of Monster Energy Kawasaki's Dylan Ferrandis, even



though the Frenchman crashed three times in the first moto and hit a dubious gatedrop in the second outing that left several teams and rider frustrated that the FIM had not red-flagged for a restart (as they had done for the qualification heat on Saturday).

Herlings' numerical autonomy in the standings hovers on the fringe of four Grands Prix and it is not tempting fate too much for the KTM team to start making plans once again for a title confirmation. '84' did remark that his primary goal would be to try for a milestone in the sport of an undefeated streak (of overall GP wins) but a broken record attempt could see Herlings sticking a toe in the MXGP water before the end of the season. A run on a 450 or 350 would also stand him in good stead for a versatile role at the Motocross of Nations and hopefully his first participation since 2012.

The regularity of MXGP takes a large hit post-Mantova. An almost unprecedented three weekend hiatus means an authentic (and welcome) summer break before another flurry of fixtures through August and September where the last six meetings in Czech Republic, Belgium, Switzerland, Holland and the USA will undoubtedly blow-by like a Gariboldi Honda on full pipe.



Pauls Jonass might have been a distant second in the second moto but the Latvian was the best of the rest and would have made the rostrum for the sixth time in 2016 if he hadn't become caught up in a second corner pile-up in the opening race. '41' is fashioning a fight for the number two plate once again and has Jeremy Seewer in his sights with a 25 point deficit







It was a day of charging for Jeremy Seewer but the placid Swiss has rarely looked more dejected after the second moto when a crash while pushing for the top five (and an eighth podium) ended his chances “that’s what happens when you just take too many risks,” he said. Seewer and the factory Suzuki team were also aggrieved at the gate wobble that trapped the 91 and ruined his start and lodged a complaint with the FIM for refusing to stop and restart the race. “I was cruising the first lap and just expected them to stop it,” offered Thomas Covington on the incident. “The red flags never came so I thought I’d better get going!”









Thomas Covington missed a first podium appearance on the factory Husqvarna by just one point and the American was agonisingly close to overtaking Kemea Yamaha's Benoit Paturel to making the top three. Now recovered from ankle and wrist problems '64' is another rider to watch, especially with two home round still to come. Teammates Conrad Mewse and Max Anstie experienced contrasting days with the teenage Briton again figuring in the top ten and the only other GP winner in the class apart from Herlings falling and tweaking his knee in the second MX2 moto.





Kawasaki

Kawasaki  
MONSTER  
14

















Chad Reed (top) encountered a track that was more demanding, tight, picky and rough in Italy. The Australian signed off his European stint with a DNF and DNS due to a small hand problem and also an electrical issue. As in Britain '22G' was a popular draw at the event despite relatively little track time and is set to line up in the Grand Prix gate again for the final two rounds on American soil.

Red letter day for the Orange brigade with Suzuki's Bas Vaessen (top, right) toasting EMX250 victory; the first of his career and putting three Dutch riders into the post-race press conference with Herlings and Bogers taking honours in MX2. Vaessen kept error-free and benefitted from a technical problem and crash for Darian Sanayi (the first moto winner) who he was pressurising for the lead at the time.

Tommy Searle (right) was disqualified from a hard-fought twelfth position in the first MXGP moto for course-cutting after an allegedly testimony from a trackside marshal. Monster Energy DRT Kawasaki Team Manager Steve Dixon presented GPS and data evidence to the FIM to demonstrate the hit that Searle received from another rider pushed him off course and that the Briton actually lost time rather than made gains in the incident. The jury upheld their decision much to the team's chagrin after making an effort to counter the initial claim. A fourteenth in the second moto was Searle's sole 'take' from Italy.





MXGP LOM









# CLASSIFICATION & WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

## MXGP OVERALL RESULT

Riders		
1	Tim Gajser, SLO	Honda
2	Gautier Paulin, FRA	Honda
3	Clement Desalle, BEL	Kawasaki
4	Tony Cairoli, ITA	KTM
5	Jeremy Van Horebeek, BEL	Yamaha

1	Tim Gajser, SLO	Honda
2	Gautier Paulin, FRA	Honda
3	Clement Desalle, BEL	Kawasaki
4	Tony Cairoli, ITA	KTM
5	Jeremy Van Horebeek, BEL	Yamaha

## MXGP STANDINGS AFTER 12 OF 18 ROUNDS

Riders		Points
1	Tim Gajser	532
2	Tony Cairoli	440
3	Romain Febvre	408
4	Max Nagl	401
5	Evgeny Bobryshev	396

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1	Tim Gajser	532
2	Tony Cairoli	440
3	Romain Febvre	408
4	Max Nagl	401
5	Evgeny Bobryshev	396

## MX2 OVERALL RESULT

Riders		
1	Jeffrey Herlings, NED	KTM
2	Brian Bogers, NED	KTM
3	Dylan Ferrandis, FRA	Kawasaki
4	Thomas Covington, USA	Husqvarna
5	Pauls Jonass, LAT	KTM

1	Jeffrey Herlings, NED	KTM
2	Brian Bogers, NED	KTM
3	Dylan Ferrandis, FRA	Kawasaki
4	Thomas Covington, USA	Husqvarna
5	Pauls Jonass, LAT	KTM

## MX2 STANDINGS AFTER 12 OF 18 ROUNDS

Riders		Points
1	Jeffrey Herlings	597
2	Jeremy Seewer	428
3	Pauls Jonass	403
4	Benoit Paturel	325
5	Aleksandr Tonkov	320

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# SHIFTING SANDS...

By Adam Wheeler

Last week the morning of the referendum results that will see Great Britain leave the EU filled me with dismay (the football last night compounded the emotion). I've still to find someone who wanted the country to jump out and give coherent and impassioned reasons for doing so. International movement has been a subject also floating around far overhead in the sport of motocross this year. I first heard whispers at the opening rounds of AMA Supercross in January, more murmurs around mid-season in MXGP and then both Chad Reed and Jeff Emig touched on the subject in a public Q+A at Matterley Basin and the British Grand Prix. If Supercross – the second biggest motorcycle racing series in the world despite the fact that it dips out of United States' borders just once for a jaunt to Toronto – wants to get bigger and wants to go overseas for another two rounds.

There is a need for a longer, more analytical and more balanced article somewhere in the pipeline but not until the delicate politics and agreements behind the scenes are close to resolution and one of the 'chess-piece-movers' feels confident to speak on the topic with some authority. Until now there are just whispers and snippets of information coming out of discussions behind closed doors. Why is this a fundamental issue? Well, Supercross already strains American teams, resources and riders with seventeen races in eighteen weeks and needs the tight timetable to maximise the use of stadiums, the dirt used to make the tracks and also give some room for the AMA Pro Motocross Nationals to run in the summer; a series that Coombs and Co brought back from the brink and ripened participation at the end of the last decade by being flexible with the format.

If SX heads abroad then this will mean more time, more travel and more commitment from the people, brands and companies that form the sport. Any major change in timetabling for supercross is going to affect the motocross landscape.

Why would Feld take supercross across water? Exponential growth in TV coverage and viewership in the past two years on American shores means the promoters are on an upward scale and they must have been aware for a number of years how their product would be a fantastic draw in a number of other territories. SX is also an 'FIM World Championship' and after aborted attempts to run a concurrent series at the start of the century then time is ripe and the worst years of the financial crisis are now a memory to be able to start thinking about expansion once more. There have also been a few 'chips' at their door. Youthstream initially wanted to run their inaugural 'Supermotocross Cup' as an indoor Grand Prix (but were denied by intervention) and then confidently moved onto U.S. turf with the Charlotte GP; a format a little too close to supercross apparently. MXGP also has powerful allies with principal sponsor Monster Energy; the same entity synonymous with AMA SX. Arenacross in the UK has been flowering considerably to take indoor racing closer to the mainstream and even without any serious 'box office' names. Busy winter supercross events in Europe show that there is an audience primed to see the world's fastest. Feld can perhaps see the responses to spectacles like Nitro Circus and Masters of Dirt and know that the model is feasible with good European/Australasian or promo partner for another continent.





Motocross is becoming less regimented. More one-off events like the Monster Energy Cup and the Red Bull Straight Rhythm (both established in the last five years) are crowding out a calendar and where an international institution like the Motocross of Nations now seems like a 'race too many'. Rider injuries are more prolific than ever and a side effect is a loosening of obligations to just one or two series' as brands still want a highly-paid racer out there doing his thing. Energy drink sponsors are deeply rooted in the fabric of the sport. Schedules are hectically changing and morphing. Athletes are committed to appearances across the board of championships and follow the wishes of sponsors or teams – see Chad Reed, Mike Alessi even Josh Hansen.

### ***'Any major change in timetabling for supercross is going to affect the motocross landscape...'***

If Supercross moves then what will become of the Nationals? How can motocross get any later in the summer to accommodate the top names and still be a practical and viable series for competition? If Supercross becomes even bigger and more ingrained internationally then what repercussions will it have on MXGP in the future? Typically young French talent have been keen to use Grand Prix as a springboard to the U.S. and a way of life that involves stadiums full of public, endless sunny riding days on pristine tracks and potential riches and glory.

A career path to stadiums (as opposed to Grand Prix) could become even easier, and for more 'unlikely' nationalities (a Latvian World Supercross Champion? Why not?) Supercross could be ridden far more in corners of Europe and around the world.

Seeing the likes of Reed in MXGP, news that American teams Pro Circuit, JGR Yamaha and Eli Tomac of the Monster Energy Kawasaki squad will line-up for the MXGP season-closing MXGP rounds in Charlotte and Glen Helen in September had me thinking about the increased agenda and compromises for top tier riders nowadays, and even compared to five years ago when AMA racers were already trawling through a hard SX-MX term solely. Undoubtedly there is more pressure and demand on U.S. based athletes and this cannot be a positive step...but what if a twenty-two round AMA/FIM SX World Championship is established by 2019 or 2020? Running from January to June and visiting the U.S. Europe, Australian, Asia and South America? Riders could orientate their deals and goals around the 'indoors' and then engineer a new type of contract that would involve high-profile appearances in racing series' in several countries. It might sound far-fetched but if manufacturers are already talking about extension of SX then the limits for the 'construction' of the sport (teams, sponsors, fans' interest, sales, markets, sponsors, broadcasting) will soon be found and the mould for motocross generally will break.



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# PULPING ABROAD...

By Steve Matthes

No Lucas Oil Pro Motocross Championships in Muddy Creek, Tennessee for me this week. Nope, this report is coming straight to you from Venice, Italy and on Sunday, I was doing the GP thing. That's right, I headed over to Italy for Mantova, round 12 of the MXGP series which is always a pretty cool deal. Different riders, different tracks and some great racing all equal up to great day in Italy although very hot.

Here are some random thoughts from a random Sunday in Italy.

- The Mantova track was always one I have wanted to visit for one reason or another. For one, Italy is cool. For two, the pre-season Supercross race that was held here for years always caught my eye and three, it's just one of those classic tracks. I was surprised at how tight it was. It's a rather compact facility, lap times around two minutes and there's not much room outside of the track. Sandy with a hard base and plenty of jumps, it got pretty rough as well. Although having what seems like 34 classes riding the track on a weekend might have something to do with that.

-Yup, this Tim Gajser kid is the real deal for sure. I've been surprised at his ability to challenge (and beat) Romain Febvre this year in MXGP class. Yes, he's the reigning MX2 champion but we all know (and he admitted to me in an interview on Saturday) that he was fortunate that Jeffrey Herlings got injured in order for him to wrap up that crown last year in the USA. This year I think we all thought he would be good and challenge for podiums but this rise to domination has been impressive. In Mantova he was beat by Evgeny Bobryshev on Saturday in the qualifier but on Sunday he went 1-1 with some fight from hometown hero Antonio Cairoli in the second moto.

This victory pretty much assures him the MXGP title barring disaster and at 19 years old, he seems to have an amazingly bright future but it's just a question of where that future is. Tim articulated to me that he grew up watching supercross races with Ricky Carmichael, James Stewart and Chad Reed (when I told Reed that the rider across from his pits told me he grew up watching him, Reedy rolled his eyes and said that kind of sucks! Ahh the joys of getting older...) and that was his goal. To get to America and race supercross. He told me he practices supercross during the week and looking at him ride, he seems like he would be great at the scrubbing and technique to be very fast indoors.

We know he's doing the Monster Cup in Las Vegas in October and I suppose things will be clearer after that but listening to him get excited about coming to the USA, I think it's clear that his full-time USA racing job is coming up sooner than later.

-The second moto saw Antonio Cairoli grab the holeshot and lead most of the race before Gajser forced his way by. Cairoli's got a bad hand, he hasn't been able to ride during the week and I think he surprised himself with that ride. As a matter of fact once Cairoli slipped into second late in the race he seemed to lose his drive. No doubt his hand was sore, he was a bit winded and Gautier Paulin nipped him on the last lap to put the 222 into third. But until then Tony's ride threw the crowd into hysterics as he fought off the 19-year old soon-to-be-king. It struck me as funny that Cairoli, an eight-time World Champion and one of the very best riders to ever put on a pair of boots, is soon to be two years removed from his last title and now looked upon as an underdog!





The kids (Gajser and Febvre) have for the most part been better than the “old man” but with some MXGP wins this year and third in the points, Cairoli is far from done. But man, the scripts flip quick in this sport.

-Chad Reed's two race MXGP “vacation” is over and although his day in Italy went terrible with a crash, a bike problem and an injury from last week's race in England, he said he had fun and is looking to come back next year. I've known Chad for a long time now (worked on his team as a mechanic for four years) and as he gets near the end, I find his perspective interesting because trust me, it's changed a lot from when he was the one of the best riders in the world for a couple of years. He's got a bigger picture attitude that one gets with age.

The fans didn't get a rider that was in the mix for the top five (it's interesting that Reed's outdoor skills completely flipped after his infamous Millville “Chad-a-pult” crash in 2011) but this weekend in Italy, I witnessed that he's still a very big deal for the fans and the series is a better one to just have him there in terms of interest and excitement.

-Gautier Paulin, who will be leaving Honda at the end of the year for a rumored spot on the Ice One Husky team has been injured for most of the year but now has three podiums in the last four motos and in Italy, in heat as bad as anything I've seen in the USA, his fitness was impressive. Reed made a comment that in his first moto he could see riders that were not used to the humidity wilt a bit (everywhere I went in the paddock the intense temperature was a topic of discussion) and Paulin held strong in both motos.

-I think we forget that Clement Desalle is really, really good. Injuries and then more injuries have struck the Belgian but in Italy he was very good to land on the podium.

-I think Stefan Everts, left without many options for his Suzuki team once he got ownership of it, knew that signing Ben Townley was a risky move. There was no middle ground with having Ben on your team. It was either going to produce a top five rider with wins here or there or he was going to get hurt and miss a lot of races with the latter being the most likely. And that's exactly what happened as BT just can't get on track. One podium in a moto, a lot of crashes, missed races and this weekend in Italy a DNF-DNF performance with two crashes hasn't been great. Everts rolled the dice big-time with Ben and he got what most of us thought he would. Can't blame him for trying I suppose.

- In the MX2 class Jeffrey Herlings won again with dominant rides and yet again showed again that he's in the wrong class. Febvre and Gajser took the path of more resistance and got rewarded for it. Although he's coming off two years of injuries, Herlings seems determined to rack up the stats as he mentions his win totals more and more after these easy days. Great work Jeffrey, I've seen Jeremy McGrath walk around the pits without a bother time and time again and he's got 72 supercross wins, the numbers don't mean much in the end. Get into MXGP and get to the front there (which I have no doubt he will) and the respect will come pouring in. And it looks like he will be forced to go MXGP next year with the powers that be changing the rules on him mid-season.



D

FEATURE



# SHIFTING

**WOLVES CLOTHING? SHIFT ARE KICKING-ON FOR 2017 WITH A POTENT RE-WORKING OF THEIR RIDING GEAR. HERE IS WHAT CHAD REED, JEFF EMIG AND BEN TOWNLEY HAD TO SAY AT A SPECIAL EVENT AT THE LOMBARDIAN MXGP LAST WEEKEND...**

**By Adam Wheeler, Photos by Ray Archer**





SHIFT 2017

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## FEATURE

In stifling conditions on Friday at Mantova Shift sweated their way through a comprehensive presentation of their 2017 gear and some radical re-working for the coming year with the new '3lack' and 'whit3' ranges replacing the previous Faction, Assault, and Strike offerings. Jeff Emig was on the mic and was accompanied by Chad Reed and Ben Townley for some decent insight into how Shift have re-evaluated their offerings and how the Mainline pant in particular represents a forward step for the company.

Reed is one of Shift's icons and part of their 'Syndicate' of athletes as the firm have gone heavy on the marketing concepts for 2017 with a 'We are Wolves' group ethos; lacquering on the alternative edge of the brand. The Australian is now into his sixth year with Shift and since it began as an off-shoot from Fox to become a forceful presence on the shelves and hangers in its own right. "I have been a big part of the whole Shift scene and the current design and chassis of the new pant shows how far we have come," the Yamaha rider said. "It looks cool but it performs well and plays more of a role in what we do."

There seems to have been advancement through simplification at Shift and the high-end 3lack gear is a reflection of that. The buzzwords are 'facet function' and nothing is there without purpose. "You are going to see a lot more simplicity from Shift in the future," claims Emig. "3lack has been about stripping things back and using new materials like stretch fabric and moving away from previous incarnations that were too over-built and featured too much structure," he says.



The Mainline pant came in for glowing praise as the three explained how modern riding kit needs to do much more than merely look and wash well. With the physicality and flexibility of athletes on the motorcycle in the current age of racing then gear also need to be functional and complimentary. "It is incredible to see the evolution of the pant," said Townley. "You feel more 'at one' with the clothing and you don't feel so restricted any more."

"We have big old knee braces to fit in and it is bad enough to then feel extra restriction but that's not the case," backs-up Reed. "We have worked enough in the last few years to get the pant where it currently is."

The Mainline is formed from 600D Poly that provides what Shift call "the best compromise". It is form-fitting, features a double layer knee construction for top abrasion resistance and four-way stretch panelling (the Fox link coming in handy there) "The guys are taking incredible positions on the bike and they need the gear to perform," commented Shift Brand Manager Philippe Casadesus who then said the single model comes in four colourways, and thanks to a well-thought symbiosis the liveries can be mixed and matched with all the other garments in the 3lack or Whit3 range not to mention the baggy Recon attire.





SHIFT 2017





So what about 'Whit3' then? This used to be the 'Assault' entry-level ware and Emig was unequivocal about how well-received this aspect of Shift's catalogue has actually been. "We had incredible feedback from the dealers and customers over the durability of the product," said the former champion and one of Shift's original representatives from 1997. "We really want to support the entry level guys and those perhaps discovering the sport for the first time." Shift gear was made in '97 and so is coming into the twentieth anniversary and the price point of whit3 definitely gives it a bit of a shine."

"At the entry level point you usually have to give up some quality but we constantly hear that our gear performs; the seams don't come apart and everything just lasts longer and we take a lot of pride in that," Fro added.

The three-line Tarmac design caught our eye and a closer look at the 3lack Mainline Pant did reveal something where some serious thought and mileage has gone into the final product wrapped around the mannequin. Casadesus then quickly explained the work done in gloves (single palm layer construction and even a scaled back 'slip on' glove without a fastener), casualwear (Tees, hoodies and hats following the colourways for cool synchronisation) and the Tarmac helmet that means Shift are slowly moving more towards being a head-to-toe brand.

In what was a slightly different and revelatory exposition the final piece of information concerned the release date with the 3lack and Whit3 shipping from July 1st.

For more have a look at the website:  
**[www.shiftmx.com](http://www.shiftmx.com)**











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**HELPING TO UNDERSTAND MOUNTAIN BIKE  
FOR MX WITH SCOTT SPORTS**

By Adam Wheeler,  
Photos by Ray Archer

# SWAPPING OUT THE **MOTOR**



MONSTER ENERGY/SCOTT MTB & MX









**“SIMPSON: I WOULD SAY THAT 70-80% OF MY TRAINING AT THE MOMENT IS MOUNTAIN BIKE RIDING...”**

Scott Sports partnered up with Monster Energy to give a snapshot of understanding how Grand Prix motocross athletes use mountain biking as part of their training with a novel event prior to the British Grand Prix at Matterley Basin. Using a corner of the vast site near Winchester – actually a small slice of woodland with some gentle trails inside – a gathering of riders like Clement Desalle, Shaun Simpson, Jordi Tixier and Petar Petrov joined a host of media on the new Scott Genius Plus model for a brief ride-out and then talked about how the knobbly tyres compliment the many miles on the road bikes.

“It depends on your training but I would say that 70-80% for me at the moment is mountain bike riding,” reveals British Champion Simpson, who will allegedly help launch a brand new Scott goggle at Grand Prix of Belgium at the end of July. “I do a lot of road cycling as well but with mountain bike you can find some similar conditions as to what you’ll find on a motocross bike. Of course the jumps aren’t as big but you can get near the same kind of intensity in terms of concentration. You need to stay alert and your reactions are constantly being tested which is something that road cycling doesn’t really give you.”



The Scot says he normally ‘MTB’s’ according to time as distance can obviously be difficult to track and average speed can vary a lot depending on the course and path. Simpson says he hits moto length ‘pushes’ of around forty minutes and can reach 70-90% of his heart rate capacity. Other, longer, outings sees the twenty-eight year old aiming at 60-75%. “It is impossible to reach higher levels consistently because your legs would just blow up,” he points out. “The HR level is different for everyone...so you have your own zone to work in. It is a special key part of my training and is just a bit more fun; time passes quicker. Road cycling can get a bit monotonous.”

“For working on fitness and heart rate then you are looking at the road,” believes former MX2 World Champion Tixier, “but I am also doing a lot of mountain biking in France and it is more fun. I try to do it as much as I can.”

Scott share out the fun at Matterley with a fleet of the new Genius Plus. “It has still got a 27.5 wheel but also a 2.8 inch tyre for masses of grip,” says Scott UK Rep Josh Gibson. “This means a 21% contact patch increase and for climbing uphill and in loose terrain; it is just a 1% increase in drag.”





The Genius Plus also has a special touch. Gibson: "It has a twin-lock lever patented to Scott and we are the only ones on the market allowed to use this technology. A push of the lever simultaneously locks both the front and rear suspension; it locks the front and pushes a platform on the rear to stop the travel at 90mm so the geometry becomes a lot better for climbing. The back end comes up and pushes the front more for traction."

The bicycle is light – just 13.2kg in standard trim and a medium sized frame - and has a carbon front end and aluminium construction on the back. A single gear cog on the front might confuse a few that think the Genius Plus doesn't have the rideability compared to other models but as Gibson points out "with the 42 tooth cog on the back it is actually a better ratio coming up than having two cogs on the front." The bike comes-in at a wallet-stretching 3800 but is a tasty piece of kit and just one in the Scott catalogue that also features E-Genius battery powered creations. There are other benefits to the Genius Plus: "You can also put a 29 inch wheel in there so it is like having two bikes in one; with the bigger wheel you can cut through mud much easier and find a lot more grip," ends Gibson. "The Scott bikes are second to none. It is great to see such technology coming through," offers Simpson.

"I think most motocross riders use mountain bike as a form of practice," opines Petrov. "There are differences but it is useful for balance and coping with conditions. Many people can do it and it is also pretty easy just to get out on the bicycle."

"I like to use both forms of bicycle and change around a lot," admits Desalle. "On mountain bikes you can get closer to nature and not just tackle the road."



A fifteen-minute 'sortie' sees media trying to keep up with the athletes even though there are clearly some competent riders among the photographers and journalists. The Genius Plus is a vastly capable vehicle for the outing and some of the shallow bumps on the trail. For a moment motocross and the pressures of a Grand Prix are lost in the comparative silence of the English trees and greenery. There couldn't be a better way to preface a world championship event where other knobbly tyres get turned a whole lot faster in a matter of hours.





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FEATURE

# REED ON THE SPOT

By Adam Wheeler,  
Photos by MCH/Monster

## THE AUSTRALIAN SX STAR FACES THE PUBLIC









**H**e kept them waiting in Matterley Basin but like most press men know Chad Reed is good value when you stick a microphone or Dictaphone near and ask an opinion.

**On the whys and wherefores of appearing in MXGP...**

I wouldn't have ever said that it'd be fifteen years for me to do another GP when I left here in 2001 but the U.S. has obviously kept me busy! I'm here for fun, a vacation and to enjoy the fans and ride GPs again. I'm heading straight to Australia afterwards because I haven't been for a while. It's winter there unfortunately. I'll take the month of July off and then start ramping up for the two U.S. GPs and then the Monster Cup. Monster is a huge part of MXGP and also my programme. We had such a late entry in the U.S. and our project and the way it all formed. They only wanted to do supercross, which fit my plans perfectly. When it turned out I had the summer off Monster mentioned it [the idea of GPs].

**On an inconsistent supercross campaign...**

With the team being based in California and me in Florida I feel that we lost our way a little bit in the middle of the season. With the race team also having not been actively racing in seven years; I feel like we went through a learning curve...that I'm glad we went through. We started out good, lost our way and by the end we were strong again. I think for '17 we'll be really good and what we learned will help out. This year and 2013 were the only times where I have not won a race. This year I was one of three people to have done two hundred

**Over a hundred people found a spot on the Monster Energy rig in Britain to throw some questions at the Australian and here is a collection of some of the best 'grilling'...**

starts so that was quite an achievement. I think [Mike] LaRocco has the record and if I finish next year and the following one like I want then I can take that record.

**On whether he'd consider a full MXGP season...**

It's not on the cards unfortunately. I enjoy them more than I do the Nationals truthfully. I enjoy the campervan living, the vibe of the hospitalities and everything like that. Was I was eighteen and here in 2001 I learned that 'way'. The hustle and bustle of the U.S is fun but it's a drag and it's a long season. I feel like I'm at a point in my career and with the family that packing it all up and coming to Europe is not something that is going to happen. I cannot do this week-in week-out any more. It beats-up-on-you and I can honestly say that I am happy I'm not racing motocross on a full schedule. It allows me to focus on the family and supercross and creative, fun events like this. I'm at a point in my career where it is more about the excitement and the fun and not the long hours or riding for the paycheck; those days have been and gone. I'm thankful and now I want to ride my dirt bike when I can and for as long as I can.



**How it all began...**

I have a cousin [Craig Anderson] who is about five years older than me and he is actually Australia's most successful rider back home. I had him to look up to. He was kinda like my big brother and like all big brothers you want to beat him! He was doing all the cool things I wanted to do and it really challenged me as a kid to ride faster and chase him. That was really where my passion started.

**On James Stewart...**

James and I have never really had any kind of relationship that would last more than one race and a 'high-five'. We were competitors and we always wanted the same things and had the same goals. It is sad, to be honest, to see his struggles and what he is going through. I think the talent is still there, I just don't know where the misconnection is happening. To see a guy who has fifty Supercross wins to only finish one main event this year is sad. He has to really dig deep and find what the problem is. He is not my personal friend at all but I hope for the good of the sport that

he finds his feet. We need guys like James out there and being competitive. [Ryan] Dunge [y] was a runaway this year and by the time Kenny [Roczen] caught on fire it was over. It needs all of us to be there healthy and fighting each week. Rivalries are fun. I love Ryan Dungey and he's a great friend of mine but he is so boring! There is no rivalry there [for him]. For me it healthy for the sport to have the Stewarts and people like myself battling.

**On who he thinks might be faster: Roczen or Gajser...**

I think that the level at the top is always even. Tim is obviously at the top of his game and Romain [Febvre] as well and they are a step above everybody. It is the same in the U.S. Kenny is in a league of his own right now and there is a big gap to the Tomacs and Canards. Honestly speaking I feel like they are one and the same; they scrub, they are fast and have similar riding styles. If I had to guess I would say that Tim has watched a lot of Kenny growing up in Europe and then the U.S. I would like to see him ride Supercross.



## FEATURE

### On living with the prospect of injury...

You know it is there...but you turn a blind eye to it. There is a line you try not to cross but you flirt with it. The day that I am worried about that then I will go and stand at the bar! To be the best in the world you have to push the envelope always. We know what can happen but that's why we work and train hard and wear all the equipment to minimise the risk.

**"I DON'T THINK IT IS FAIR TO TAKE GP GUYS AND PUT THEM IN AN AMERICAN ENVIRONMENT AND EXPECT THEN TO 'DO IT' AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL. I DON'T THINK IT IS A MATTER OF THE SKILL... IT IS MORE THE SET-UP OF THE BIKES..."**

### On Reed Junior taking up the mantle one day...

My youngest one seems like he is into it but then so did Tate, who is six now. I don't know to be honest and I don't push it. I never remember my Dad or Mum saying "now you have to do this..." for me it was always "I want, want, want" I could never get enough. I can remember getting mad at my parents because I was out of gas! My kids ride a little bit but they have this 'normality' of jumping on planes and going to see what Dad does. There has been a

### On a memorable career moment?

There are so many. Starting from the beginning and being eighteen with two suitcases and coming on a plane to Europe. Sitting in a driveway in Belgium with a map and saying "how do I get to Spain?" That was quite memorable. Then going to the U.S. and winning my first supercross championship...it has been a lot of fun. A lot of ups-and-downs but that's what makes it fun. I look at Ricky [Carmichael] and how successful he has been but in some ways there is something missing when you have a conversation with him because he was always perfect, perfect, perfect and it is hard to sustain that lifestyle.



lot of good and bad in the last few years and the injuries. I remember one story...I asked my son: "why don't you want to ride?" and he said "I want to be happy" and that hurt. When my kid says that then it hits home a little bit. It was a bit of perspective that I have to take. Behind closed doors when you are not getting the results at the weekends then it hits the family. You are mad and working hard and he sees and feels that so I don't think it is as fun for him as it was for me because of the pressure.





**On being unable to compare MXGP and the Nationals due to the calendar and different demands on the athletes...**

I think it is going to change and not for the better! I don't think there will be any less races coming up. I think it is going to be really difficult for motocross to sustain and survive in the U.S. I do believe we will go global with supercross and it will be our forte and what we do. Obviously I will miss that time...

It is difficult to answer the question of comparison; the style of riding is very different. In Europe they carry a lot of momentum into the turns so the corner speed comes from starting wide and getting into the bumps, which are small and really close together so you need a different kind of suspension. They carry a lot of mid-corner speed and exit speed and it gets really rough on the exit. In the U.S. we are so used to supercross that everything is just wide-open and so aggressive. There is a lot of added dirt, woodchip, sand and what-not. It is hard on the brakes and the bumps coming into the turns are much bigger than they are here where it is hard and tight and point-and-shoot. I think when the Euro guys come to the U.S. they really struggle with set-up because it is

always way-too soft and obviously that's their style and forte. Likewise when we come here... I find that I go to turn and the rut continues right through the turn and you have to re-learn how to carry the momentum. I don't think it is fair to take GP guys and put them in an American environment and expect them to 'do it' at the highest level. I don't think it is a matter of the skill...it is more the set-up of the bikes.

September to May is 100% Supercross and riding a stiff bike on a small track. Literally you get one week off and it's straight into motocross and the bike feels so soft and wrong! It takes a transition. The bikes look terrible in the first few motocross races because they are too stiff but by the end of the season the guys are doing it...but then you flip back into supercross. It is really difficult. To be fair the sponsors only care about supercross. You can be good at it and then only hired for that job. If you are only good at motocross then you are struggling. Look at Jeremy Martin; really, really good at motocross and so-so at supercross and he's struggling and nobody is really willing to take that gamble.





## PRODUCTS







## LEATT

We focussed on Leatt's Hydration products a couple of issues ago but here's a look at some of their highly-rated chest protection.

Top of the drawer is the 4.5 Hydra that 'combines real chest and back protection with a backpack and hydration system that harnesses securely, comfortably, to your body'. A good option for a heavy enduro or trail outing. We couldn't explain it better than Leatt themselves: 'Harness the system on your body for a secure fit, then use the quick-adjust straps to attach the front chest plate where it fits you best. The front chest plate wraps farther around your flanks than other chest protectors offering you enhanced flank protection. The backpack harness system help keep the full backpack from bouncing around, or slamming into, your back while riding. The backpack itself features our top of the line CleanTech 3 litre bladder, with quick detach hose, and rests in an insulated compartment. It also has pockets and compartment for virtually anything you need for a long ride. Great front vented is coupled with ribbed AirLine air channels and mesh to help keep you cool on even the hottest of days.' Naturally materials are good and the item is designed to be as light and practical as possible. The versatility will set you back at 220 dollars.



A more standard Chest Protector is the 4.5 but Leatt says it has 'premium hard shell protection precision engineered with great fit thanks to the articulating design. Leatt® neck brace integrated, chest, flank and back protection with maximum airflow makes this a must have piece in your armoury. It costs 139 dollars with the junior version at 89. Lastly the Body vest with integrated Chest protection (189 dollars) is again more of a tilt towards people spending substantial time on the bike or prefer a firm fit of their protection under more riding kit. Expect the fabric to moisture-wick and do all the fancy stuff of modern day sporting equipment.





# TOMORROW TODAY

By Adam Wheeler,  
Photos by Ray Archer

AMONG A PLETHORA OF OTHER TASKS YOUR IPAD CAN NOW HELP YOU RIDE BETTER. WE TRAVELLED TO CALIFORNIA AND BACK TO TALK TO SCOTTISH TRAINER AND FORMER RACER CHRIS HAY ABOUT HIS INVOLVEMENT WITH **LITPRO** AND HOW THE SOFTWARE IS MAKING DATA DESIRABLE AND WHY MOTOCROSS TV COVERAGE COULD CHANGE FOREVER...



**MX OF THE FUTURE WITH LITPRO**





**LITPro** has been around for a little while. Last year and this season the likes of Ryan Dungey, Jason Anderson and Ken Roczen could be spotted with a strange contraption – a ‘black box’ – on their lids during the supercross campaign. It was a sign of the times and how a sport where tenths or inches never carried as much importance as in road or car racing can now be finitely recorded, analysed and corrected. Gone are the days of a mate holding a shaky video camera. Thanks to a receiver, portable device, 3 or 4G coverage and a willing interpreter of the information; LITPro has allowed motocross and supercross athletes to be more precise than ever. The natural ethos of motorsport encourages ingenuity to seek the smallest competitive advantage and now riders have an asset that turns the technology tables on themselves and goes beyond blood test results, a diet plan, fitness charts and even video capture tools like Dartfish.

In terms of TV, LITPro and similar systems could revolutionise coverage. We’re used to seeing RPM, speed, track positions and even lean angles in F1 and MotoGP but motocross will add another dimension with jump distances, airtime and – in keeping with the ratio of man-machine of the sport - measurements on the g-force and heart rate of the athletes.

It is January 2016. We’ve arrived in Lake Elsinore. Thirty-three year old Scot Chris Hay has a house a short distance from the historic town centre and a professional base since he allowed his own British Championship winning boots to become dusty. Hay has been located here for ten years now and during our visit the majority of the Monster Energy DRT Kawasaki team are resident for the month training and



riding. Hay has been helping Tommy Searle and Vsevolod Brylyakov and also using the Grand Prix duo to run more tests with LITPro around tracks like Pala and other renowned sites in SoCal.

He gets out his iPad and gives us a tour so we can see what all the fuss is about. We review one of Searle’s sessions from the previous day and watch the former world championship runner-up as a dot on the screen going through laps, times, jumps and lines. It seems like a video game: a mix of a graphically-realistic map, various colours, digits and scales. It is fascinating to chart Searle’s progress as he goes through his moto, getting faster and better and altering his trajectory. Things become more graphic when Hay swipes through to Michael Leib’s data from the 2015 Oakland supercross. “This is the way the lap was set-up and there is a lot of G-force in supercross because of the big landings,” he explains as Leib circulates the track map. Oakland was grim for the ex-Grand Prix rider “he broke his tib-fib and talus navicular in one go,” says Hay who was working closely with Leib during 2015.



Kawasaki  
DIXON RACING TEAM  
MX OF THE FUTURE WITH LITPRO





"Forces can be anything from 8-10G and then more if you have a crash," Hay continues. "He was at 22.4G when he fell and that was coming through his head so the actual impact was greater; something had to go. He seat-bounced a rhythm section wrongly and had to eject and landed into the fourth jump. You can see he was going for a fast lap because his heart rate goes up to 180. Everybody is different but it usually hovers around 180-181." It is gripping - if grim - viewing as the red 'dot' suddenly stops, wobbles and the other figures go

through the roof. "He crashes and the G-Force spikes and his heart rate peaks at 190 as the pain hits. You can almost feel it. You have conclusive proof there of what is happening with the athlete. I then turned it off at that point."

With iPad still in hand we ask Chris to take us through 'what', 'how' and 'why' something like LITPro will trump anything a standard GPS watch can do to assist training and development and why aspiring racers have taken notice.ments there...



## So what is the rider wearing? A unit on his lid...?

And a heart rate monitor. It is all linked by Bluetooth. There is talk further down the line of having more hardware but at the moment it works really well.

## The unit transmits the telemetry?

All it does is record data and then after your session you can upload the data into the programme and analyse it. So if you go to a practice track - or even do a race - you can come in and see what you have done. Depending on the length of time you are on the track it can

take between five-ten minutes to upload and you can make a new track as well.

## So what do you have on the iPad?

There are two Apps. The first is the Sync App but the main thing is LITPro. It stores every session you have done. You can set the track map and it shows the warm-up laps, top speed, average speed, distance around the track (in metres or feet), total air time, average G-force and peak G-force that is measured by impact. If you land hard or hit a big bump then it will measure it.



**I can see you've broken the track into five segments there...**

Yeah and the green line is his fastest. You ride the track for the first time and then just create it and split it up.

**So if you arrive to a British Championship race or a GP track or test track then you can do a lap and 'create' the track through the data...?**

Yes and it depends on the length of the track but normally I create four-five splits. If it is a GP track then you can create the segments in accordance with the timekeepers.

**Is it easy to do? People might look at it and think 'complicated...'**

Yes, as with anything it is trial-and-error at the beginning. I use it myself when I ride and in between sessions I will sync and have a look and I know 'ah, ok!' You can overlay laps and thanks to the green and red trails see where you are going quick and can maybe go quicker. What you'd do afterwards is look where you can gain tenths or a second and where you are making good lines and time. Obviously this is what guys in MotoGP have been doing...



**I guess the biggest paradox is applying something so precise to a sport that is 'loose' and not necessarily in the same bracket as something like road racing. But it does seem to simplify and qualify what a rider is doing right and wrong...**

That's right and on a well known track [he shows us Pala in California and Searle's laps from the other day] it gets clearer because you can have things like jumps lengths and distances and analyse air-time. One of the founders of LITPro wrote an article dissecting the airtime of all the guys using the programme on one specific jump and broke it down to try and

explain why one guys wins from that group. He broke it down to reveal that is was the guy leaning further forward and not necessarily scrubbing. It was more about forward momentum. There was a lot to it.

**Have you found that riders are generally receptive to assets like this?**

Generally I think they are. Guys that are more analytical pick it up a lot quicker. I think guys that want to get better then accept it. Obviously some don't care so much but it is such an easy thing to embrace with a view towards improvement.





**This is now your fourth year as a trainer?**

Yes.

**So if you took on an athlete like say, Cooper Webb, would you want to go with that in your hand?**

Yes because I honestly feel that it can benefit every rider to see what he or she can do. I think it is an advantage, and if the top guys were doing it then I think you'd see the rest take it on. When I work with a guy I'll say to them "is there anywhere that you feel are struggling to get a line?" We all have that 'thing' in motocross where we are thinking 'is that line the fastest? Is that the fastest way?' You might think it is...but do you have any proof? Now you do. You can select one area of a track and overlay the lines done on the different laps and identify what was more effective...and even look at heart rate. This is just one part of the App. We also have a Gatedrop section that analyses the time and distance from the start gate so that can be measured. I mainly look at lap-times, corners and lines and in supercross we look at air-time and rhythm sections. Each rider has different characteristics.

**I assume the accuracy is good...**

Really good. The things we are working on more are to do with interface and making it easier for the general public or the hobby rider to operate it and see the value; to be able to see what they can get out of it to be better. For me I'll gather data from every session a rider will do but it more to look back into over time and dip into things like body analytics so you can see the amount of times you have been in heart rate zones.

**What are the drawbacks at the moment?**

The hardest thing right now is that we need wifi or internet coverage to operate it so if you are at a track that doesn't have coverage then you won't be able to make the sync between sessions. Sometimes in the stadium we struggle with the GPS data because we need eight satellites and if it's a covered arena then we cannot get it...but most stadiums are open and motocross tracks obviously.

**When did this kind of technology start coming into play?**

I actually saw the company start coming into the sport in 2013. They had a couple of guys testing it and they brought me onboard in 2014. We did a few demos and the process from where we started to now has been huge. They have been developing all the time.

**The advantages seem obvious for the tight confines of supercross...**

I think in that discipline it is already beneficial for a rider to see what he has done. You'll get a print out of your lap-times but you still won't necessarily know why you did one particular lap-time. You are just guessing. You will say "I did that lap well..." but what was it exactly that you did differently?

**If you think about it then this is long overdue in motocross isn't it?**

Yeah. This is the only product that has come close to giving riders more information. There are others but this is the most versatile and advanced in a lot of ways. The App goes very deep in other aspects.

**Maybe it will need riders to change attitudes. Some experienced ones will still rely on feel and instinct as they have always done. A rider like Vsevolod Brylyakov might embrace this more than someone with much more experience like Tommy...**

Even Tommy though...at a session I will say to him "try some different lines; then we can analyse it". Riders shouldn't be afraid to try





different things. Tommy was actually quite forthcoming and believed it would offer an advantage at the races...in timed qualifying especially.

**Not meaning to sound dramatic but it could be like an overhaul in the sport. Some riders will be convinced about what they do and their personal line choice. But if they come in and you can show them that another course is quicker...**

It will open minds I think. The riders that see the potential of what they can do thanks to programmes like this will get better. I know for a fact that last year LITPro helped Dungey win a race. There was a certain supercross in 2015 where another top level rider was doing something different on the track and they analysed the data and it was between 0.2-0.5 a second quicker. If you do that every lap? It adds up over twenty; it is a lot of time at the front.

**At a race there is not a lot of time. With this system it is like you become a technical part of the team...**

You do, and if you are a trainer then this is what's needed. You can help them physically and with nutrition and to warm-up etc but that's really easy. This is the stuff that has to make the difference. Even when we were out training the other day Seva's mechanic came to me and said "can you check the data because I'm not sure if I had the right lap-time". So I uploaded and had a check and he was right, Seva had managed a 1min 53 lap.

**But as a former rider yourself how will it feel to be the guy that the rider now almost has to speak with first after a session or a race?**

It is tough because some guys will be like 'I have my own way...' but if you can prove it to them then they are like 'OK, I get it'. We have also made tests for road racing. I was working with a rider and we decided to try it on a lap of Fontana. A lot of it is just about gathering information.

**What heart rate was he hitting in road racing?**

Around 163-166, pretty low, but in road racing there is slightly less demand; it is more concentration and precision. I was more worried about the device falling off because it was attached to his helmet! Line choice was less critical there and it was about small adjustments.

**It is obviously a tool. Is it something you just download from the App store?**

You can buy it. The first batch came out in October 2015 and the new one is in February. From a training standpoint I feel that the trainer has to be there to do this stuff because if you are at a race then a rider will have a lot going on with commitments and being pulled left, right and centre. I feel that this is our job. We download, look and analyse and say to him or her let's go through the session.

**Can you envisage there being a Pro and Lite version for the professional racer and the weekend rider?**

That is one of the things we have talked about in the company. We'll have a couple of different avenues with a 'trainer' version and then a 'public' version. It is all in development and it works well. It is all iOS based and can be synced with iPhone or iPad but to create a track you need an iPad. Just personally I love looking at it and I'm always trying to beat myself.



**May 2016.** Hay has been working around Steve Dixon's team at MXGP and the British Championships. In keeping with the common cliché around the world of technology: things have moved fast. Dungey has already appeared in a website video with a GoPro lap tethered to his LITPro data and the Red Bull KTM rider has won a second consecutive supercross title. Website [www.racersonline](http://www.racersonline) asked the champion what he thought of the training aid and importantly how it might pop up into television pictures soon. "LITPro has been a big advantage for us just here in these open stadiums," he is quoted as saying in a recent story. "But it sounds like they're working for the future with Feld and to try and hopefully do some good things. Not just lap times, sections, and overall times and everything like that but maybe heart rates and all kinds of information that they can live stream straight to television. I don't know. Don't take my word on that. The thing with our sport, we have our helmets on all the time. Nobody sees that suffering and the high heart rates, so it will give them an idea of the physical endurance that it takes to do what we do. I think it's good for all of us."

"[seeing] Heart rates would be cool but I think even better would be the speeds," he added. "I think people would be really surprised how fast we are going into the whoops, through the whoops."

We had demurred with Hay that some of the older generation of riders might be reluctant to place trust in data over instinct but twenty-eight year old double British Champion and twelve year veteran of Grand Prix Shaun Simpson told us he was "dying to give it a go" where as Searle was a little more blasé. "I liked it...but then I also haven't used it that much and you need a good connection for it to work properly," he opined. "I have found it useful but there is just so much information. I think its main advantage comes with a 'live' service because it is much better to see what you are doing right away instead of having to wait. I do think you need someone there doing

it for you and interpreting it."

"I reckon it is best used when you are in a group and you can see and compare what others are doing," he adds. "For supercross and rhythm sections it is ideal and guys like Dungey and all those in their compounds can keep seeing and checking."

LITPro is seeping further into the establishment but MXGP is still unexplored. Live transmission of data is forbidden in FIM rules – mainly in an effort to control costs – but teams are already using telemetry recorded during sessions and then tweaking set-up afterwards. It is helping with bike modifications but offers limited assistance to the rider. Searle and Brylyakov can be spotted in photos for the 2016 Thai Grand Prix with the LITPro device on their helmets and Hay has been helping the team. In an interview conducted two year ago with Youthstream – in Thailand oddly enough – the Grand Prix promoters admitted that live GPS signals could have promising repercussions for the TV package but the investment then in equipment and antennae was still adrift of the standard needed for broadcast. It seems that this summer MXGP has been beaten to the punch by the Americans. More than four months have passed since we last spoke to Chris on his work with LITPro – a firm that was originally started with a staff roster of just two people – and the wheels have apparently been turning rapidly.

### **Has LitPro moved forward since we last spoke?**

There has been quite a lot going on. We have been trying to update the App and we've developed a 'live' system, which is a lot better than before. It is mainly a training tool and will provide live updates to the trainer or the rider himself when he's on the bike. It is the next level really. It's been in development for a while now and we can see what is happening a lot faster. I've been riding with it and you actually get messages into your ear about your lap-times and your segments...which is pretty amazing. I've used it myself quite a few times





now and it is phenomenal because we are getting much more information than before.

**That must have consequences...**

For 'Live' you need a phone connection, preferably 4G, and that's the drawback...at the moment. But we're just at the beginning and we'll get more experience through the nationals this summer and an NBC deal.

**So LitPro is actually being used for broadcasting now?**

You know how you have seen the GPS on MotoGP TV coverage? We can now essentially do that for motocross.

**That's quite a big deal then...**

It will be good and you'll see it on the TV pictures at the Nationals. I actually need to head back ASAP before Hangtown to be the liaison between NBC and the athletes.

**In MotoGP you see almost every bike with an onboard camera or GPS info. How will it work in the USA?**

There will be data coming from a select amount of riders, depending on who NBC chooses. I not 100% sure at the moment but I think it will be five riders in each class and it will be linked to the television broadcast.



## So that's five riders wearing the unit; no issues with homologation there then?

In America it is fine...it is a bit trickier in GPs at the moment but we are working on it.

## I think there is actually an FIM rule forbidding the transmission of live data during a race...

At the moment there is and the issue we are running into at the moment with MXGP is the GoPro agreement they have. We have to make sure we have indemnity and it will take some time to sort out but it is in the process.



## You could theoretically see someone like Tony Cairoli wearing two devices on his lid; looking like a Christmas tree...

You are probably going to see that happen over time. Things will move. We'll see. There is a lot going on. I have already spoken to Youthstream about it, and it has only been a couple of weeks, and they are keen. They wanted to try it on the GoPro lap from the German Grand Prix but because of a few technical issues we couldn't overlay the information and we still need to find an agreement there. I think you will see it on American TV first because we are well down the development line for that. It will be 'next level' for the viewers. LITPro were covering the Nationals last season with data acquisition and there were not many issues. I'm sure the first few rounds will be an adventure but we are building something for the future. Hopefully it will all be sorted and dialled-in by Hangtown already.

## Have LitPro got any 'ambassadors' yet? As GoPro do...

At the moment it is just a small company. The riders are seeing the value in it because they want to use it. They want to wear it, rather than being made to wear it. I wouldn't say we have ambassadors but we have partnerships. All of Aldon Bakers guys – Dungey, Anderson and Musquin – have taken it onboard and Aldon is extremely 'into' the product. Dungey has been wearing it at every possible opportunity. Chad Reed even uses it as well...so we have pretty much nailed the top five in the class!



## What about in GPs?

Yes...we used it in Sync mode – so not Live - in Thailand with Seva and Tommy. It is a 'grey area' at the moment and we want to make sure we are using it the right way.

## What about the British Championship then?

Yes, we are using it there and have not had any problems. I ran it with Tommy at Canada Heights and it was more for looking at data afterwards. I don't know if you saw Tommy's crash? [now a notorious slow-mo video clip of a first turn pile-up] but there were some pretty high G-forces going on there. It came through as 18G through his head; pretty big! We could look at the laps afterwards and see what was going on. The more data I have the more I can help the riders. I don't tell them too much or make it too complicated because they have enough going on as it is but if there are just a couple of pointers I can see through the programme then it helps.



MX OF THE FUTURE WITH LITPRO





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# MOTUL TT ASSEN

**CIRCUIT DRENTHE · JUNE 26th · Rnd 8 of 18**

**MotoGP winner: Jack Miller, Honda**

**Moto2 winner: Takaagi Nakagami, Kalex**

**Moto3 winner: Pecco Bagnaia, Mahindra**

# MILLER TIME...

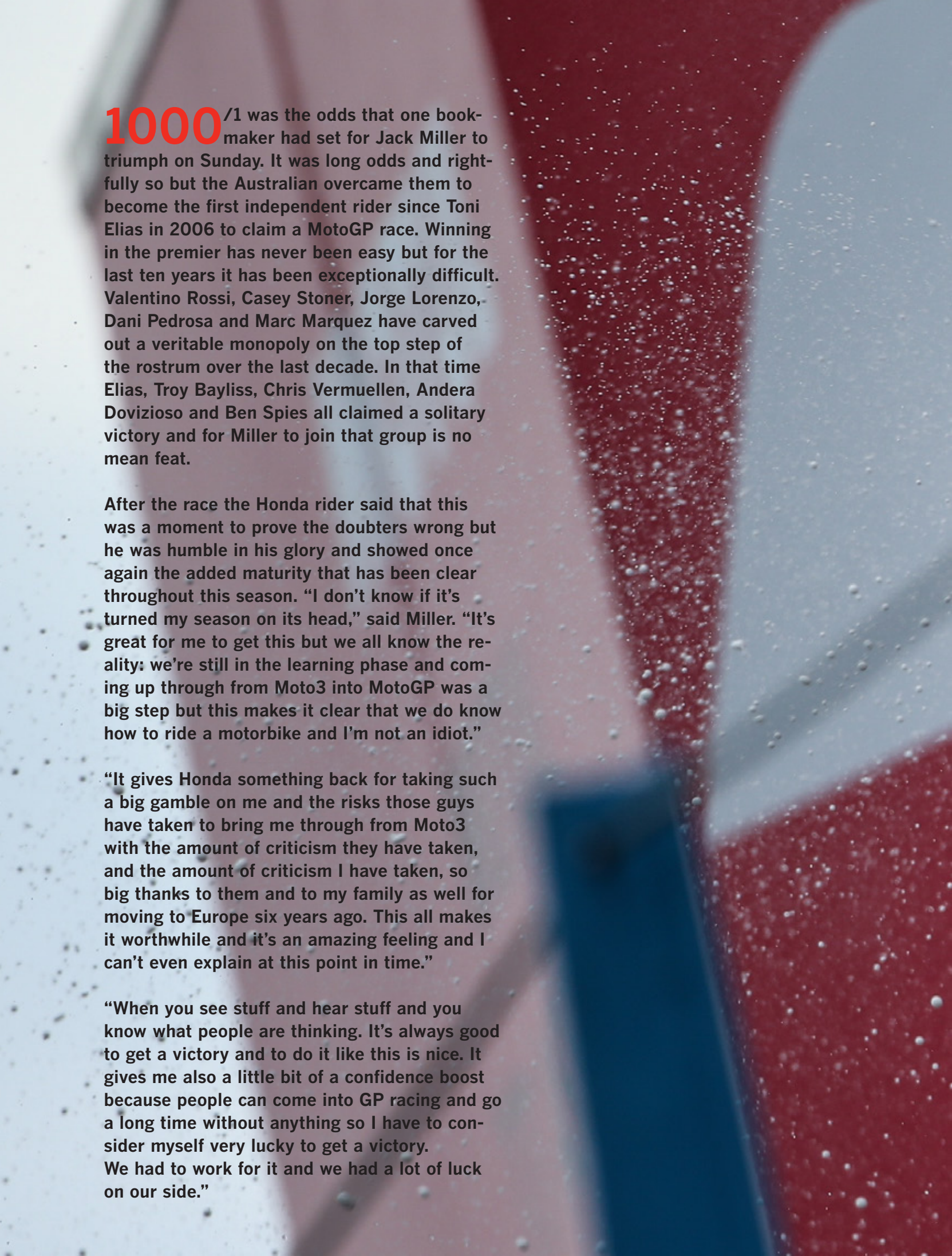
Photos by CormacGP [www.cormacgp.com](http://www.cormacgp.com)

Words by Steve English,

Blogs by Gavin Emmett, David Emmett

JACK MILLER WENT FROM NEARING THE STATUS OF BEING A CAUTIONARY TALE IN MOTOGP TO SUDDEN HERO LAST WEEKEND AT ASSEN IN WHAT SEEMED TO BE A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION OF THE DUTCH EVENT TO A SUNDAY SCHEDULE. EVEN IF THE CLIMATE DID NOT WANT TO PLAY BALL THE MOTUL TT ASSEN STILL REPRESENTED YET ANOTHER 'LEFT KINK' IN THE TALE OF MOTOGP THIS SEASON. STEVE ENGLISH CASTS HIS OPINION AND CORMACGP DRIED OFF IN TIME FOR ANOTHER SPARKLING GALLERY





**1000**/1 was the odds that one book-maker had set for Jack Miller to triumph on Sunday. It was long odds and rightfully so but the Australian overcame them to become the first independent rider since Toni Elias in 2006 to claim a MotoGP race. Winning in the premier has never been easy but for the last ten years it has been exceptionally difficult. Valentino Rossi, Casey Stoner, Jorge Lorenzo, Dani Pedrosa and Marc Marquez have carved out a veritable monopoly on the top step of the rostrum over the last decade. In that time Elias, Troy Bayliss, Chris Vermeulen, Andrea Dovizioso and Ben Spies all claimed a solitary victory and for Miller to join that group is no mean feat.

After the race the Honda rider said that this was a moment to prove the doubters wrong but he was humble in his glory and showed once again the added maturity that has been clear throughout this season. "I don't know if it's turned my season on its head," said Miller. "It's great for me to get this but we all know the reality: we're still in the learning phase and coming up through from Moto3 into MotoGP was a big step but this makes it clear that we do know how to ride a motorbike and I'm not an idiot."


"It gives Honda something back for taking such a big gamble on me and the risks those guys have taken to bring me through from Moto3 with the amount of criticism they have taken, and the amount of criticism I have taken, so big thanks to them and to my family as well for moving to Europe six years ago. This all makes it worthwhile and it's an amazing feeling and I can't even explain at this point in time."

"When you see stuff and hear stuff and you know what people are thinking. It's always good to get a victory and to do it like this is nice. It gives me also a little bit of a confidence boost because people can come into GP racing and go a long time without anything so I have to consider myself very lucky to get a victory. We had to work for it and we had a lot of luck on our side."









Miller's feat sees him become the tenth youngest premier class winner and while the aftermath of the race was filled with tweets and congratulations about the party that is sure to follow it does Miller a disservice. Last year he came into the class and was overweight and not anywhere near the fitness level required of a MotoGP rider. By midseason he had turned himself around and was looking incredibly fit and strong. It took time for Miller to adapt to the class and the commitment required but his new found fitness was the main reason that he could still test on a badly fractured ankle in the off-season. His commitment allowed him to get back on the bike as quickly as possible and while it is likely that Sunday night was a frenzied night it was the calmness of Miller in the race that stood out.

"I'd have been pretty happy if they'd cancelled the second race because I was pretty content with ninth. In the second race I tried to keep as calm as possible because I do get a little excited at times. I didn't make a bad start and pushed to make my way through. I sat in behind Petrucci, got past him and then got in behind Marquez. When Valentino threw it in the gravel I saw Marquez had calmed down a little and he was happy where he was because of course he was leading the race. When I went past I tried to stay on a similar lap time and ride my own race and I could see that Marc didn't really want to take any risks and who could blame him!" Miller becomes the twelfth Australian to snare a premier class race and the first since Casey Stoner in 2012.














Assen could be a pivotal day in the destiny of the 2016 MotoGP world championship. Valentino Rossi crashed out while leading and Jorge Lorenzo looked as comfortable on a wet track as a cat in a bathtub it was Marc Marquez that remained calm and bagged 20 points for second position. Wet races are always a true lottery. The first man on the tarmac finds the conditions before everyone else and without warning can crash. This is what happened to Rossi who afterwards said that it was “a stupid mistake from pushing too hard.” The restarted race was a 12 lap shootout and saw the title contenders with hugely contrasting results. While Lorenzo could take solace from collecting six points this was another day where he showed again his lack of confidence in the rain.

The Spaniard admitted last year that he was still spooked by his 2013 Assen crash and it's hard not to think this wasn't a factor on Sunday. The mental scars of that Assen crash were far greater than the physical battering that left him with a fractured collarbone. The long lasting scar tissue was exposed once again on Sunday.

Those six points could be important at the end of the season but if we have another wet race Lorenzo's rivals will be licking their laps. Last year at Silverstone, Misano and Motegi he struggled and his weakness again cost him points on Sunday.

For Rossi his mistake could also prove very important and having fallen 42 points adrift in the championship he admits that he now faces an uphill task. “I arrived into Turn 10 and I braked in the same point,” said Rossi after the race. “I arrived 4-5 km/h faster than before and I lost the front. All weekend I have been very precise in my riding style never made a mistake because I saw all the other guys make mistakes and crash. Unfortunately I made a mistake in the most important moment.”







"At the time I couldn't hear the noise of the other riders, so I already I had a good advantage but I thought that 'I wanted to push another lap to take advantage and after try to control the situation'. Unfortunately I pushed too hard."

"When you lose a race like this is a shame. Now it is more difficult because Marquez has quite a big advantage. I think that the zero points in Austin was my mistake, the zero in Mugello was for engine but this race is a problem for the championship. The championship is not finished until it's finished and now we have just to try the best every race track, try to be competitive every weekend."

Assen was round eight of eighteen but with Lorenzo and Rossi both handing Marquez a huge bounty it could prove critical at the end of the season. For Marquez the importance of keeping a calm head was not lost on him as he continues to mature and shows the lessons learned from past exuberance. "Honestly, it feels like a victory because it was a race that you can lose a lot of points in the championship and my mentality was to just go out and try to finish the race," said the Spaniard. "I knew that Valentino was fast in those conditions but my mentality was to finish the race. I was pushing, I saw that Valentino was pushing a lot and, I said to myself that I'm not in the same level as him...but when I thought that he crashed."

"When Jack came past me in the last corner I was behind him by one or two seconds and I tried to control the gap to third position. At this time second place was enough for me. Today is an important race because it was the time to lose many points or gain a lot of points." Marquez heads for the German round in two weeks with a very healthy 24 point lead.











Assen gave yet another guilt-edged chance to Ducati to claim their first win since 2010 but once again the Bologna manufacturer is left searching for a milestone race. The wet conditions are typically a perfect opportunity for Andrea Dovizioso to show his talents and with Danilo Petrucci always strong in the damp hopes were high for a win. Both riders crashed out of the re-started race and joined Yonny Hernandez, who amazingly led the initial re-run, on the sidelines. Ducati has been presented with opportunities to win races but when Valentino Rossi fell out of proceedings Dovi was the firm favourite to win. Unfortunately for the Italian he joined his compatriot in the gravel trap soon after.

"It's very disappointing because we did a great weekend and took a great pole position," said Dovizioso. "It was a very difficult race to manage and I was leading when the red flag came out. Myself and Valentino pushed so hard to beat each other and we pushed too much. The reason why we crashed was the front tyre didn't work."

"It was my mistake and I'm really sorry to the team because after a bad weekend in Barcelona this race was very important. I'm very disappointed about myself because it was a really good chance to get a result. I feel strange because there were too many problems with the front tyre and it was difficult to manage."

With Dovi and Petrucci out of the race Ducati honour fell to Scott Redding and the satellite rider took a stunning podium. Prior to the red flag it was the Englishman who was the fastest man on the track and he was two seconds quicker than the leaders as he bridged the gap to them. While Dovi, Rossi and Petrucci were tripping over each other and doing their best not to crash into them Redding looked ready to pounce.

The red flag put paid to that but after the race he was adamant that Race Control made the correct decision to halt proceedings despite it costing him the chance of a first victory.

"I wanted to understand the track and not make any silly mistakes in the beginning," said a clearly elated Redding. "In the first race when the rain came I felt better but it was stopped at the right time because there was a lot of rain and a lot of aquaplaning."

"When we restarted I didn't want to push too much and I didn't want to lose the race in the first laps. Marquez and Miller had a lot of rear grip and I pushed more than I wanted to but they were still going away so I took one step back, held the position and I saw the guys crashing. When the track came to me I started to catch Pol Espargaro and I thought there was no reason really to pass him because I couldn't catch the leaders so I waited until the last two laps and passed him."

This has been a trying year for Redding but Assen offered plenty of hope of improved fortunes for him. While Ducati is still chasing that first win he has at least given them a sliver of a silver lining with an improvement in form. Redding's future is still not certain but this result should be more than enough to cement his place with the Pramac squad for 2017.





MotoGP NED



# JACK OUTTA THE BOX?

By Gavin Emmett

In all the time I've been working in the MotoGP paddock, I don't remember a race-day filled with so many surprises. The caveat on that is I've got a terrible memory but nonetheless in the 250th MotoGP race since that very first event at Suzuka in 2002, eyebrows were raised and jaws were dropped even more so than on that damp day in Japan.

That day had started with Arnaud Vincent taking just a third grand prix win in 125s, and however unexpected it was on the day, he somehow went from strength to strength to clinch the title later that year. The 250s were then dominated by unheralded Japanese wildcards Osamu Miyazaki and Daisaku Sakai, with the former winning out on his Yamaha – interestingly his last ever GP appearance. Then later that day, Valentino Rossi won the first race of the new four-stroke MotoGP era ahead of Akira Ryo, following an amazing performance from the Suzuki wildcard.

At one point in the second part of Sunday's Dutch TT, it looked as though Rossi may complete the circle by winning again in the rain 249 races and 14 years later, however it wasn't to be. He lost the front as so many did over the weekend. A remarkable fact is that every single MotoGP rider came a cropper at some point at Assen. It's hard to check on stats on when this last happened, because they don't exist (it's hard to quantify what actually constitutes a 'crash') but I can't ever remember it previously.

What that appears to tell us is that Michelin struggled in all conditions in Holland. These are the best motorcycle racers in the world after all. The front end in particular was not getting heat in, and in the wet that proved costly for many, including Rossi. There is clearly still big work to be done for the French manufacturer.

The beauty of wet weather races in the past was always how they levelled the playing field by not allowing the top machines to be taken to their limits. Certain riders have a knack for a loose bike, whilst others like Pedrosa and Lorenzo have been forced to hone their wet weather skills over many years of average results.

In recent times the bike with the best electronics package on the day has often shone through, favouring the factories, but with this being the first race MotoGP has had in the wet since the introduction of the standard ECU across the board in 2016, I doubt there was much advantage to be gained anywhere. It was down to feel on the day.

It meant Jorge Lorenzo struggled. Massively. He is well aware of Assen being his bogey track as he explained to me at length in an interview before the weekend even began. He crashed in FP3, and then was in his worst qualifying position since the same event in 2013. That was when he broke his collar-bone in a high-speed crash during a wet practice, only to return and claim a brilliant fifth place. He admitted in the mixed conditions a year later that he had been fearful of repeating the feat.

It looked as though those ghosts were back to haunt Jorge in Assen. He may have finished and picked up six points, but even in the dry it was doubtful he would have challenged Rossi, Marquez or Dovizioso for the win.

Rossi in turn will be kicking himself for crashing out. He appeared to have the measure of the conditions before and after the biblical deluge. Having gone with the soft in part two however, he suffered the fate of so many in the race, with the extra rear traction pushing the front that bit too much.

This all meant that Marquez emerged from the weekend triumphantly celebrating a second place,





his third in as many races. He knows he is heading to Honda territory at Sachsenring, and looks likely to start the second half of the season leading the championship.

***‘The Aussie may well self-style himself the ‘Jackass’ but deep down Miller is a lion...’***

Then there was just Jack. The Aussie may well self-style himself the ‘Jackass’ and play the goat more often than not, but deep down Miller is a lion, and he was finally able to demonstrate the raw talent that led HRC to put the faith in him to make the jump up from Moto3 at the start of 2014. His performance made me think of other Aussies who have shone despite technical inferiority in the wet. Chris Vermeulen on the Suzuki springs to mind (MotoGP race #87), and of course Ant West, but he is also the first Aussie winner since another rain master, Casey Stoner (MotoGP race #187). (Casey did in fact crash out of the Suzuka 250cc race mentioned above – his debut as a permanent GP rider, but as he was just 16 at the time we’ll let him off.)

Those Australians all have one thing in common – a background in speedway or dirt-track. With a greasy Assen surface in the wet, which is a fairly recent phenomenon at what was once a grippy track when soggy, the innate ability to sense the slightest flicker of movement crafted by junior years slipping and sliding on the sand becomes a godsend.

Cal Crutchlow had been amazed (and worried) at how fast Miller blasted past him at the start of the second part of Sunday’s race, but that the aggres-

sion of the Queenslander could well have put the heat into the tyres that others were lacking. Cal is a huge fan of Jack, and has taken the youngster under his wing since they were team-mates last year. He has encouraged Jack to train more, offered a friendly environment when required, and banged the drum for his talent in the wake of criticism. Their embrace in parc fermé was a touching display of friendship from two hardened individuals.

Miller is clearly an extremely talented rider, that much was evident when he rode first as a wildcard in the 125s in 2011, when his parents had upped sticks to caravan him around European national series, including in the Netherlands. His problem is that the Honda and Michelin combination is just not working at the moment, but that’s the case for everyone except Marquez. He has another year of contract with HRC, and Sunday’s result should have done enough to convince them to honour it, so he will hope for better support next season.

He has become the first rider from an independent team to win a MotoGP race since Toni Elias at Estoril over ten years ago (MotoGP race #81), and the first ‘non-Alien’ since Ben Spies, also at Assen, in 2011 (MotoGP race #160).

I remember my colleague Neil Hodgson telling Jack to enjoy every win of the six he took in Moto3 because the next one was probably not going to be for some time, if ever, as the length of those records show.

By breaking his MotoGP duck, where superbly gifted racers like Hodgson and Crutchlow have been unable before, he is in a territory that few get to enjoy. The resulting confidence boost will hopefully allow the Australian to finally appreciate he has the tools required to cut it in the MotoGP field, and push on to celebrate again and again as he did long into Sunday night.









MotoGP NED





Assen saw the final piece of the factory jigsaw put into place. With six manufacturers on the grid next year it's amazing to think that by the end of June all seats have been filled. Aleix Espargaro was the last rider to pen his place on the grid with the Spaniard finding solace at Aprilia after being left in the cold by Suzuki.

Espargaro's signing means that Spain will have seven factory riders on the grid next year. While that will understandably send a shiver down the spines of many non-Spaniards the line-up of the grid results over this season should give confidence that this will be an aberration rather than a trend to continue.

The ongoing success of Spanish riders has long been attributed to the strength of the Junior World Championship which is cradled in Spain. However, with five Italians in the top five of the Assen Moto3 race, a Japanese winner in Moto2 and a host of fast riders coming through the ranks Spanish dominance could be on the wane.

Racing is, like many forms of life, cyclical. We now have the likes of Brad Binder, Johann Zarco and Sam Lowes added to the host of fast Italians on the grid it's clear that a changing of the guard is coming. Spanish riders have only won one Moto3 race this year and the championship standings in Moto2 and Moto3 sees only Alex Rins, Jorge Navarro and Joan Mir in the top ten.

Gone are the days of hearing the Spanish anthem three times on a race day. This year we have heard the Malaysian, South African, Italian, Swiss, French and Japanese anthems played in the junior classes.

Next year Lowes and Zarco, who looks likely to be confirmed at Tech3 in the near future, will join the premier class. It's taken time but the Spanish rule of the MotoGP grid may soon be a thing of the past.









## RIDER MARKET NEWS

**Alex Rins:** As has long been touted Rins got his wish of a factory seat at the MotoGP table. The Moto2 title contender will join Andrea Iannone at Suzuki.

**Cal Crutchlow:** Confirmed during Thursday's press conference that he will remain at LCR for another season.

**Alvaro Bautista:** The Spaniard is in talks with Aspar about rejoining the team that he won his 125cc world title. Bautista will be replaced at Aprilia by Espargaro.

**Stefan Bradl:** Options are looking thin on the ground for the former Moto2 champion. A return to the intermediate class has been touted but a move to WorldSBK looks more plausible.

**Johann Zarco:** His future is still uncertain but with no factory seats available it will be a surprise if he is not confirmed at Tech3 at the German Grand Prix.

**Eugene Laverty:** Looking for the best chance to win races in 2017 will make a return to WorldSBK a very real possibility for the Irishman. Had advanced talks with Kawasaki but Yamaha, Honda and Ducati all interested. Still in talks with Aspar to remain in MotoGP but facing competition from Yonny Hernandez.

**Jack Miller:** His Dutch victory should see his future on the MotoGP grid with Marc VDS confirmed soon. Miller is entering the final year of his three year HRC contract.

**Tito Rabat:** Marc VDS looks likely to practice patience with Rabat and grant him a second year in the premier class.

**Scott Redding and Danilo Petrucci:** Very long odds on a change at Pramac for next year with both riders having flashed their potential at times. Redding's podium came at the perfect time and he is confident of remaining with the team.

**Avintia Racing:** Hector Barbera has enjoyed a strong season and is likely to remain. With Zarco set to join the grid Loris Baz may be an expendable Frenchman but second seat likely to be decided between Baz and Yonny Hernandez.







# PONDERING THE LIKELY FROM THE UNLIKELY...

By David Emmett

**H**istory was made at Assen on Sunday. Jack Miller's victory in MotoGP was the first for a rider from a non-factory team in nearly ten years. It's hard to compare Miller's win to Toni Elias' victory at Estoril in 2006, though. Miller may be with a non-factory team, but he is on a factory contract, having been signed up by HRC to a three-year deal in MotoGP. Toni Elias was a genuine satellite rider, having signed with the Gresini Fortuna Honda team. Miller's win came in atrocious weather conditions, in a race split into two parts after being red-flagged due to zero visibility and bikes aquaplaning. Elias' win came in the dry, in a scintillating three-way battle with Valentino Rossi and Kenny Roberts Jr – a race, KRJR's crew chief Tom Jojic reminded me at Assen, which Roberts really should have won. Elias was helped to victory because he was given a set of Dani Pedrosa's so-called Saturday Night Specials, the custom made tyres shipped in by Michelin for top factory riders. Miller had to use exactly the same Michelin wets as every other rider on the MotoGP grid, tyre selection now strictly regulated under the single tyre rules.

Is there any qualitative difference between Miller's win and that of Toni Elias ten years ago? Not really. Sure, Elias did it in the dry, always a tougher task than when rain levels the playing field, but the Honda RC211V was by far the best motorcycle on the grid at that time. The grandchild of that project, the Honda RC213V, is very much a runt by comparison. It has plenty of horsepower, but not much of it is actually usable. Someone who has seen the data told me that the Honda riders spend 80% of their lap feathering the back brake, in an attempt to keep the front wheel on the ground. Muscling a bike like that around in treacherous conditions is fearsome task indeed. All that with a badly broken

leg. The tibia and fibula were "shattered" a paddock source told me, and though the bones were healing well, there was also significant cartilage damage. Cartilage does not grow back, and Miller is likely to have problems with his leg for the rest of his life. Not enough problems to stop him from winning a MotoGP race, though, obviously.

Miller faced a barrage of criticism over his decision to jump straight from Moto3 to MotoGP. Fans and prominent journalists declared that it would not end well. That criticism intensified during his first year in MotoGP, perhaps rightly. Miller did not seem to grasp the scale of the opportunity he had been handed. He turned up in Sepang several kilos over his racing weight. Understandable, perhaps, after having spent so many years starving himself in an attempt to remain competitive on a Moto3 bike. But he was also badly out of shape, and did not appear to be taking racing in MotoGP particularly seriously. He had a reputation for preferring parties to putting in the hours of hard physical preparation which it takes to get ready for MotoGP.

That all changed in the second half of last year. The arrival of Alberto Puig as a mentor and coach has helped whip Miller into shape. He knuckled down to his training, started cycling more and working harder than before. Switching to the Marc VDS team helped too. Michael Bartholemy had long wanted Miller in his team, after signing him to a contract to race Moto2 back in 2013, which Miller then reneged on to stay in Moto3. Bartholemy is a hands-on manager, regularly checking in on his riders and keeping up with their training. The atmosphere in the team – a little more free-wheeling and loose – also suits Miller's character.





All of these factors, and another year of growth, have put Miller on the right path to success. The conditions may have played a role in his win at Assen, but that belies a real sense of progress. “We were lucky today with the rain,” Miller told us after the press conference. “That helped us. But I don’t know if you saw but all weekend we’ve been getting faster and faster. It happened before there in Mugello and Barcelona. We were unlucky there. We’ve changed a lot the structure and how we work in the team. I’ve been working crazy hard on my physical condition to become more of an athlete. Last week I had to thank Cal. He can be credited with this as well. I went to the Isle of Man and stayed with him. We all know Cal is a world-class cyclist. We put in 500k in just over a week on the pushbikes in the mountains in the fucking Isle of Man.”

***‘Any Moto3 rider going straight to MotoGP will need to have a long-term deal in place...’***

Miller’s results are starting to improve, and with more time between races until Brno, his leg has more time to heal, and Miller has more time to work on his physical conditioning. In the latter half of the season, Miller needs to get closer to the top ten, and start to make Cal Crutchlow his target, as the best satellite Honda rider. Miller showed incredible talent in Moto3, losing the 2014 title to a couple of small mistakes, and was most impressive when he was on the underpowered FTR Honda battling with the might of the KTMs. It has taken some time, but now that talent is starting to show in MotoGP as well.

Is coming from Moto3 and skipping Moto2 a viable route to MotoGP? Jack Miller is starting to show that it is possible, subject to several important conditions. First, only a clearly gifted rider need apply. Their talent needs to stand head and shoulders above their peers to be a candidate for skipping Moto2. Secondly, any Moto3 rider going straight to MotoGP will need to have a long-term deal in place, with a three-year contract being vastly superior to a two-year contract. You will always have to write the first year off to experience, with so much to learn. But a rider should not have to spend their second year worrying about a contract for the following season, and suffer as a result of the pressure and the distraction.

Above all, though, what a rider needs is the right guidance and support. As technologically advanced as MotoGP still is, at the end it is a human who sits on the bike and tries to squeeze the maximum performance out of it. Doing that requires a combination of natural talent, extreme physical fitness, and above all, mental toughness. A rider’s attitude and approach is the most important factor contributing to their success. Despite all the technical complexity, the nut between the handlebars is still the most important component on the bike.







A Harley Davidson Low Rider S motorcycle is parked in the foreground on the left, showing its front wheel with a gold-colored rim and a black tire. The background features a large wall covered in dense, repeating French text in various fonts and sizes. The scene is illuminated by streetlights, creating a high-contrast, urban atmosphere at night.

HARLEY DAVIDSON LOW RIDER S

# HIGH RIDING ON THE LOW

By Roland Brown, Photos by Lyonel Beylot and Stefano Gadda

**THE NEW HARLEY DAVIDSON LOW RIDER S FOUND ROLAND IN A SCEPTICAL MOOD BUT AFTER A BLAST ON THE FRESHEST (AND SPORTY) OFFERING FROM THE AMERICANS OUR VETERAN TESTER DISCOVERED A LIVELY THROTTLE AND AN ENERGISING RIDE. ONLY AVAILABLE IN BLACK? READ ON FOR A VERDICT**



**“H**earth-thumping power... Incredible performance... Get behind the screen and hang on for one hell of a ride.” Plenty of motorcycle brochures feature similarly stirring words that don't match reality, so I wasn't expecting anything special as I threw a leg over the Low Rider S's seat, after digesting Harley-Davidson's latest fighting talk.

But there was something about the way this big black V-twin ticked-over that made it seem different. A slightly malevolent feel that increased when I blipped its throttle, the revs rose quickly, the juddering vibration smoothed, and the sucking of the air filter by my right knee was lost in the throaty burble of its exhaust.

And when I let out the clutch and wound back the throttle I was shoved against the seat-back as the Low Rider S barked louder and leapt forward with a force that I've rarely experienced from a production Harley. Moments later, I'd changed gear several times and the quick-revving bike was still pulling hard at around 100mph while I crouched behind its screen and hung on.

That blast was soon over but the Low Rider S had made its point, and in retrospect it's no surprise that the black bike generated plenty of straight-line speed. The standard Low Rider comes from Harley's Dyna family of rubber-mounted V-twins but this newcomer joins last year's Fat Boy S and Softail Slim S in a separate, elite group of S-for-Sport models.

Like the other two it is powered by the 1801cc Screamin' Eagle engine, enlarged to 1801cc from the standard Low Rider's 1690cc. This bigger Twin Cam 110 (its capacity in cubic inches) powerplant was originally created for Harley's exotic Special Vehicle Operations factory customs. Its maximum torque output of 156N.m at 3500rpm is over ten per cent up on the smaller Twin Cam 103 unit's figure.



Peak power is still unexceptional, with independent tests in the US showing just over 80bhp rear-wheel horses between about 4500 and 5500rpm, but this low-revving motor is seriously grunty. The black-finished lump breathes in through a tapered Performance air cleaner, and out through a pair of slim, side-by-side silencers that are also finished in black.

In fact the Low Rider S is black almost everywhere, including its bikini fairing, handlebar, fuel tank and tailpiece. There's also plenty of black on its upgraded Showa suspension parts: 39mm cartridge forks up front, and a pair of Premium Ride emulsion shocks at the rear.





HARLEY DAVIDSON LOW RIDER S





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HARLEY DAVIDSON LOW RIDER S





## TEST

The handlebar is almost flat, combining with the ultra-low seat and mid-mounted footrests to give a riding position that is slightly sportier than the standard Low Rider's but still almost upright, helping to make the Harley easy to manoeuvre for a machine that is heavy, at over 300kg. It's also easy to ride in a straight line, as you'd expect of a bike that develops maximum torque at just 3500rpm.



Fuelling is spot-on, and that huge 45-degree V-twin felt effortlessly strong, whether I was riding gently or winding back the throttle to send the bike ripping forward with shoulder-loosening ferocity – accelerating so quickly that at times I had to concentrate on hooking gears to avoid tagging the rev-limiter at just over 5500rpm. Not that I had much idea how hard the Harley was revving much of the time, or what speed it was doing. Its speedo and rev-counter were set into the tank, way below my field of vision.



Still, apart from the narrow mirrors and deliberate lack of a pillion seat there weren't many other impractical touches. The Dyna frame's rubber mounting kept things smooth. The seat seemed reasonably well padded. The screen diverted wind from my chest, and didn't generate a huge amount of turbulence even when the Harley was cruising along in sixth gear, feeling effortlessly long-legged.

There's a fuel gauge set into the dummy cap on the left of its fuel tank, whose generous 17.8-litre capacity will give most riders a range of well over 150 miles. The left handlebar also has a cruise control button that will be useful on longer trips.

The Low Rider S steered more sweetly than I'd expected given that it's a big, laid-back bike with a long wheelbase, forks kicked out at over 30 degrees, and a 19-inch front wheel. Its Showa suspension gave a well-controlled cornering feel while delivering reasonable comfort. Ground clearance wasn't bad by cruiser standards; braking power was positively impressive. The four-piston front calipers bit the 300mm front discs with sufficient force to slow rapidly, and the twin-piston rear added useful assistance.

Unlike plenty of cruisers the Low Rider S can't be accused of being all show and no go. It's well-behaved, reasonably practical and most of all quick and fun to ride. Less positively it's also far from cheap, costing almost 20 per cent more than the standard Low Rider (just under £15,000 in the UK).

But the S-bike is much less expensive than Harley's exotic CVO factory customs. And it delivers a straight-line adrenaline hit to compare with any previous aircooled streetbike from Milwaukee, plus an appealing bad-boy character and a feeling of riding something special. Heart-thumping power and one hell of a ride, then? Ultimately, it's hard to disagree.





HARLEY DAVIDSON LOW RIDER S





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By Ray Archer











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**'On-track Off-road'** is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focused on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP. 'On-track Off-road' will be published online at [www.ontrackoffroad.com](http://www.ontrackoffroad.com) every other Tuesday. To receive an email notification that a new issue available with a brief description of each edition's contents simply enter an address in the box provided on the homepage. All email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for purposes connected with OTOR.

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